



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

HALSTEAD PREPARATORY SCHOOL

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

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Halstead Preparatory School

Full Name of School	Halstead Preparatory School
DfE Number	936/6402
Registered Charity Number	270525
Address	Halstead Preparatory School Woodham Rise Woking Surrey GU21 4EE
Telephone Number	01483 772682
Fax Number	01483 757611
Email Address	registrar@halstead-school.org.uk
Headmistress	Mrs Penelope Austin
Chair of Governors	Mr John Olsen
Age Range	3 to 11
Total Number of Pupils	215
Gender of Pupils	Girls
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS): 59 5-11: 156
Head of EYFS Setting	Mr Christopher Wardle
EYFS Gender	Girls
Inspection dates	21 Jan 2014 to 24 Jan 2014

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in January 2010.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website www.legislation.gov.uk. Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Education (DfE) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors and another governor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Jane Chesterfield

Mr Huw May

Mrs Emma Smith

Mrs Debbie Buckenham

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)

Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Halstead Preparatory School is a day school for girls, located in a residential area not far from the centre of Woking. It was founded in Kent in 1927 and moved to its current site in 1947. It is owned by the Halstead Educational Trust, a registered charity overseen by a governing body.
- 1.2 The school aims to give a balanced education to each individual child in a homely, caring environment; to give every girl the opportunity to realise her full potential academically, emotionally, spiritually, physically and creatively, and enable her to progress confidently to the secondary school which is appropriate for her. Each pupil is encouraged to be self-disciplined, to have independence of thought, to produce her best possible work and to develop a caring attitude to all members of the community.
- 1.3 The school educates girls aged from three to eleven years, offering Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision in its Nursery and Reception (Kindergarten) classes. Since the previous inspection a new headmistress has taken up post with effect from September 2013, following the retirement of the previous headmistress. A new bursar and a new head of pre-prep took up their posts in September 2012, and a new EYFS co-ordinator was appointed in 2013. A major building programme is currently under way, with completion due in the summer term 2014, and a number of areas of the school have been refurbished in the last four years.
- 1.4 Currently there are 215 pupils on roll, of whom 59 are in the EYFS. Standardised tests indicate that the ability of the pupils covers a wide range, but that most are of above average ability.
- 1.5 Nine pupils have been identified as having English as an additional language (EAL), though none of these pupils requires support. Fifteen pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and nine receive support from the school. Two pupils currently have statements of special educational need. Pupils come from a range of social and ethnic backgrounds.
- 1.6 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

School	NC name
Nursery	Nursery
Kindergarten	Reception

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The school meets its aims very successfully, providing a comfortable and homely environment where pupils are well known, treated as individuals and gain the confidence to thrive and fulfil their potential. From the EYFS onwards, they achieve highly both in their academic work and their activities outside the classroom, and have a great appetite for learning. This is thanks to the relevant and interesting curriculum, and the enthusiasm and expertise of teachers. The school has identified that the length of lessons needs to be reviewed in order to ensure that teachers have time to develop pupils' learning effectively; inspectors agree. The school has also recognised the need to share the excellent practice in teaching to achieve consistency across all classes and subjects.
- 2.2 Pupils' personal development is excellent. The school helps them to become thoughtful and considerate individuals who are aware of the needs of others and have a sense of responsibility towards the school community and the world around them. Relationships throughout the school are excellent, and both pupils and their parents say it feels like a happy family. Excellent systems for pastoral care and attention to pupils' welfare, health and safety mean that pupils of all ages feel safe and secure, knowing that adults will support them if they have problems and will not allow them to fall victim to bullying.
- 2.3 Governance of the school is excellent, ensuring that all statutory requirements are met, and that the school has been given the support it needed to go through a period of change and development, with the arrival of a new headmistress and a programme of major building work. Governors and senior staff have identified that the outdoor area for the Reception class needs to be extended and developed once this building work is complete. Excellent leadership and management at all levels give a firm steer to the outstanding work of the school. Senior leaders have an incisive overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses and set a clear direction for the future. Subject leaders have well-established roles and play a significant part in improving the quality of education in the school through excellent assessment, planning and monitoring. Relationships with parents are excellent and they are very supportive of the school. They appreciate the efforts the school makes to communicate with them and keep them informed, and they are very satisfied with what it offers their daughters.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Increase the length of lessons where appropriate to enable teachers to develop pupils' learning more fully.
2. Share the school's best practice in marking, feedback, matching work to the needs of the most able, and recording work in books, to ensure that all pupils experience a consistently high level of practice.
3. Develop and extend the outdoor area available to children in the Reception class as soon as building works have been completed.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 The school very successfully meets its aim of giving every girl the opportunity to realise her full potential. Pupils achieve highly in their academic work and in their extra-curricular pursuits. In the EYFS, the achievement of children of all abilities and needs is excellent, and they make outstanding progress in relation to their individual starting points on entry. All children, including those with SEND, reach expected levels of development while the more able exceed expectations. Children throughout the EYFS have excellent listening skills. Nursery children follow a story with keen interest and recall details during questioning afterwards. They enjoy using games on the interactive whiteboard, for example linked to this half-term's topic of jungle animals. They can recognise numbers and count confidently up to twenty. They know which day of the week it is and can accurately describe the weather. All Nursery children can recognise and name colours, and most can identify shapes such as square and circle. They understand how colours mixed together make another colour, and when texture is added, such as sand to paint, can use words like 'bumpy' or 'crumbly' to describe it.
- 3.3 In the Reception classes, children are extremely confident and highly articulate. They make excellent progress with their reading. Most can accurately sort a picture story sequence and some achieve this with assistance. They can count up to 30 and back, and count in twos up to twenty. Children are able to add together two numbers such as seven and six, explaining that they put the bigger number in their head and then count on their fingers to reach the correct answer. Some excellent work was seen linked to the Reception classes' current topic of traditional fairy tales. When the children heard the story of the 'Three Little Pigs', they built different houses from drinking straws, lollipop sticks, and building bricks. They then predicted with great enthusiasm and accuracy what would happen when their teacher tried to blow the houses down by huffing and puffing, fanning and using a hair dryer.
- 3.4 From a young age, pupils in the main school quickly learn to listen carefully and respond thoughtfully, and are articulate with a wide vocabulary and well-developed powers of reasoning. They are enthusiastic and advanced readers, and are able to write convincingly and at length for a wide range of different purposes. Pupils acquire a solid grounding in mathematics on which they can build and extend their knowledge and apply it in different subjects of the curriculum. They eagerly embrace opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT) and are able to use the latest technology with confidence. Pupils of all abilities enjoy being active and reach high standards in their physical education. They are creative and imaginative in their art work, which is consistently excellent, and apply themselves with great enthusiasm to the performing arts of music, dance and drama. Pupils are also high achievers in an exceptionally wide range of extra-curricular activities from ballet to curve-stitching. They are especially strong in netball and compete successfully in local tournaments.
- 3.5 Pupils do not take national tests or public examinations, but their attainment is judged to be high, based on the work seen in books and lessons, and their results in senior school entrance examinations. The school has a strong track record of success in entrance examinations for prestigious local schools. Almost all pupils consistently gain places at their first choice of schools, with a considerable number

being awarded scholarships. Results this year are particularly high. The school's assessment and tracking data show that pupils of all abilities make progress which is consistently good and often excellent from their individual starting points. Carefully personalised individual education plans (IEPs) combined with excellent support ensures that pupils with SEND and EAL make excellent progress through the school. Higher attainers and pupils judged as having particular talents make excellent progress to reach the schools of their choice when they leave.

- 3.6 Pupils of all ages have excellent attitudes to their learning. All are willing to 'have a go' and greet every challenge with enthusiasm and a 'can-do' attitude. They are consistently keen to answer questions and put forward their ideas. Pupils can be trusted to get on with their tasks without supervision, to work independently and to co-operate with one another in team work. They take a pride in their work and present it neatly and carefully. By the time they leave the school, pupils are mature and sensible learners who are ready to cope with the rigours of the senior school curriculum.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision

- 3.7 The quality of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.8 Pupils follow an extremely broad and balanced curriculum, which is enhanced by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities, visits and links with the community. The curriculum is suitable for all ages and abilities and is consistent with the school's aims.
- 3.9 In the Nursery and Reception classes, the educational programmes and activities planned over the seven areas of learning show depth and provide extensive opportunities for children to express themselves clearly, confidently and with much enjoyment.
- 3.10 In the EYFS, accommodation is exceptionally well planned and very well resourced. The outdoor area for the Nursery is purpose-built with many toys and equipment for the children to access freely throughout the day. The outdoor area for Reception classes is adequate but restricted at present, because of the proximity of the new building project. The school has identified the need to improve this.
- 3.11 The main school curriculum is based on the National Curriculum and senior school entrance test requirements. Resources such as the ICT room and music room are well used to support the curriculum. Themed weeks in pre-prep provide a varied programme of activities including visits by authors and storytellers. A comprehensive personal, social and health educational (PSHE) programme reflects the school's aims and ethos, and is particularly effective in supporting pupils' personal development.
- 3.12 Pupils with SEND or EAL are extremely well supported. Specialist learning support is carefully tailored to meet individual needs. The SEND co-ordinator liaises closely with form tutors, specialist staff and heads of departments. Children identified as needing support are given IEPs which are regularly reviewed in the light of monitoring of progress. Programmes of study are also adapted to meet their needs. Every pupil within the school has targets which are reviewed termly and progress is discussed in class clinics. These reviews include relevant test data. Future targets are set for each pupil and inclusivity has a high focus within the school. From the EYFS onwards, the school works effectively with external agencies so that pupils

receive additional support with their learning and development should the need arise.

- 3.13 Staff plan stimulating educational programmes that excite children and motivate them to learn. Pupils benefit greatly from the sports facilities on and off site and the opportunity to compete against other schools in games fixtures. Teachers across the school have identified able, gifted and talented pupils and provision is made for them in some, but not all of their lessons. The school has identified this as a continuing area for development. Year 6 pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- 3.14 The curriculum is enriched by an excellent programme of educational trips and visits, both locally and internationally. A residential trip to an activity centre is available for pupils in Years 5 and 6, and Year 6 spend a week in France developing their language skills and learning about French culture.
- 3.15 Activities are highly effective in supporting programmes of study and cross-curricular themes. All pupils have access to a suitable range of extra-curricular activities that include Spanish, zumba, chess club, football and choir. These broaden pupils' creative and physical experiences. The pupils gain an understanding of their community through local links with the church and on a wider scale through visiting the local borough council and the Houses of Parliament.
- 3.16 There is a seamless progression between the pre-prep and the prep school. The sharing of good professional practice, together with very effective planning between staff ensures parity of curriculum content across subject areas and year groups. Subject co-ordinators and the director of studies take responsibility for ensuring that schemes of work, medium and long term plans are regularly reviewed and updated.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.17 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.18 The expertise, care and enthusiasm of staff underpin the school's aim of enabling all pupils to realise their full potential academically, emotionally, spiritually, physically and creatively by providing an exciting and stimulating education. Staff continuously strive to create a personal and supportive framework that fosters excellent behaviour and learning and positive relationships, both inside and outside the classroom.
- 3.19 In the EYFS, highly dedicated staff, including specialist teachers in physical education, music and drama, work well together, and their high expectations enthuse, engage and motivate the children to develop their skills very well. Observation, planning and assessment systems are exemplary and identify children's next stages of learning, which include a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Teacher-led activities successfully promote children's learning and the many opportunities for children to initiate activities further enhance their learning experience. Staff are skilled at knowing when not to intervene when the children are enjoying an activity.
- 3.20 At all levels the quality of teaching makes a significant contribution to the pupils' attainment and progress. Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent and this enables pupils to successfully extend their own expertise. Pupils benefit from teaching that is very well planned and in the best lessons is highly energetic and inspiring. Teachers actively engage with pupils during activities, motivating them to do their best.

- 3.21 Opportunities for pupils to investigate subjects for themselves and to take some initiative in their work were seen in some lessons. When this was observed, learning was rapid and pupils gained additional depth and understanding in their learning. Teachers are aware of their pupils' prior knowledge and this helps to ensure tightly focused lessons that are tailored to the abilities of all, including those with SEND. In the best lessons provision for the most able and gifted pupils was woven into lessons from the outset.
- 3.22 Relationships between teachers and pupils are strong. Praise and encouragement are used to good effect and add to the pupils' enjoyment of what is being studied. Teachers ensure that behaviour is always of an exceptionally high standard.
- 3.23 All teaching includes clear learning objectives and explanations, and is often characterised by lively pace and challenge. In some subjects, an over-reliance on worksheets restricts pupils' ability to extend their own learning. Teachers make excellent use of available resources, including ICT, and produce interesting and stimulating lessons. Teachers use the time available in lessons effectively, although time available during the shorter 35-minute lessons can sometimes lead to the lesson being rushed. Pupils' previous learning is often consolidated through brisk questioning at the start of lessons.
- 3.24 The marking and feedback policy is clear, but adherence to it is inconsistent across the school. In the best examples, positive constructive feedback related to the learning objective is given in every curriculum area with pupils self-assessing their daily class work and setting targets for themselves. More global targets are set regularly and often reviewed weekly across the school. When different activities are provided for pupils of different abilities, the progress of pupils is engaging, targeted and highly effective. Pupils greatly appreciate both oral praise and encouragement as well as house points and other rewards which spur them on to greater efforts and success.
- 3.25 Since the previous inspection targets are now included in reports to parents. Efficient and comprehensive assessment procedures are well developed and these enable pupils' progress to be effectively tracked and measured. Action is taken if pupils' progress falls behind expected norms or exceeds them. Effective use is made of this information in planning lessons to maximise pupils' attainment.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is of a high standard throughout the school in accordance with its aims. A positive ethos of care and respect is evident as pupils move around the school.
- 4.3 In the EYFS, children respond confidently to all the educational experiences on offer. They are enthusiastic, polite and friendly towards their peers, and thoroughly enjoy coming to school. They understand why it is important to consider the feelings of others and the need for sharing and co-operating, and they enjoy tidying up. Children are confident when talking to and playing with adults, and they have excellent listening skills. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education and transition within and beyond the setting is smooth.
- 4.4 Pupils demonstrate their awareness of non-material aspects of life by making good use of the spacious play area outside and enjoying the art and music that are a part of their daily lives. The vibrant and energetic zumba club observed encouraged pupils to express their emotions through both dance and voice. Pupils have a strong sense of self-esteem as a result of the recognition they receive for their successes and develop self-confidence and self-awareness as they discover their own potential and strengths. They become emotionally mature through learning to take account of the needs of others and of the school community as a whole.
- 4.5 Pupils' moral development is excellent and throughout the school pupils understand the difference between right and wrong. The strong code of conduct, or 'kindness code' and the school motto, 'believe in yourself', are visually prominent around the school, and pupils demonstrate a strong moral compass, articulating clearly the need for understanding, mutual respect and positive communication. Pupils displayed strong ethical values in a discussion about conflict resolution and emphasised how an understanding of and respect for one another's cultural and religious backgrounds could only lead to stronger and more meaningful relationships.
- 4.6 The pupils enjoy a range of privileges and positions of responsibility. All pupils in Year 6 are prefects and rotate through a variety of duties, including supporting younger pupils with reading and playtime activities. Through a myriad of charity and fund raising events, often proposed by the school council, pupils develop social, political and economic understanding and demonstrate awareness for others less fortunate than themselves. Pupils visit the local borough council to observe local government in action whilst the oldest pupils visit Parliament to enrich their understanding for the power of democracy. A lesson that explored what pupils might do if they were queen for the day saw pupils respond overwhelmingly that they would like to help the poor.
- 4.7 Pupils display excellent interpersonal skills and awareness for the local community, inviting neighbourhood residents to join in some of their fundraising initiatives. Pupils are articulate in their understanding of the need to respect and protect the world around them. There are bright and engaging displays created by pupils throughout school promoting an eco-friendly environment. Pupils recycle vegetables from lunches to make compost in gardening club and eco-monitors patrol the school

turning lights off and reminding pupils to recycle rubbish and turn off taps. They enjoy a sense of community and belonging through a range of uplifting musical events and celebratory assemblies that take place on a weekly and termly basis.

- 4.8 Pupils can define the need for cultural understanding and tolerance and develop their understanding of faiths and cultures other than their own through the multicultural community in which they learn. Relationships between pupils from different ethnic backgrounds are very harmonious and pupils mix happily together in class and in the playground. Pupils enjoy Western music, theatre and culture, and also show an awareness of other traditions and celebrations. This was seen in work on the Chinese New Year, for example.
- 4.9 By the time pupils are ready to transfer to their next school at the age of 11, they have an excellent level of personal development and exhibit maturity and independence.

4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care

- 4.10 The contribution of pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.11 Pupils receive a strong level of pastoral support from staff within the school and all staff are familiar with policy and routine in accordance with the school's aims. Pupils' records are detailed and reflect the high level of attention and care that surrounds each pupil. Each child in Nursery and Reception is allocated a key person who is a point of contact for the parents and who builds a strong relationship with the individual child.
- 4.12 Relationships between staff and pupils, and amongst pupils themselves, are strong. Weekly meetings ensure that staff are aware of all pastoral matters and work as a team, communicating effectively with parents to support individual needs. In the EYFS, staff promote excellent behaviour and co-operation, and ensure the children are happy at all times in a secure, warm and welcoming setting. Each child feels valued through rewards in the form of praise and encouragement, stickers, 'wow' certificates, star of the week and certificates of distinction.
- 4.13 The pupil questionnaire identified some pupils feeling a need for an increased level of teacher support. Inspectors found that the school has a newly developed central system of recording pastoral matters, ensuring a holistic picture of the well-being of each pupil is built up and can be accessed by all staff. Incidents of bullying have been dealt with swiftly, with equal care shown towards both victim and wrongdoer. Every effort is made to support all pupils and support mechanisms are put in place to assist cases of low self-esteem or pupils struggling with friendships.
- 4.14 A range of reward systems is in place within school: bronze, silver and gold badges celebrate 'times tables' knowledge and badges are distributed for avid reading of books. House points and certificates also contribute to the new rewards system resulting in pupils feeling proud of their achievements and motivated to do well. The pupil responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire raised the question of inconsistency in the administering of rewards and inspectors found that the school has identified the need for a common policy on this matter. Pastoral support and care throughout the school is effective. The school has recently implemented a new PSHE scheme of work, so as to modernise teaching content and address relevant current issues such as anti-discrimination, healthy living, exercise and diet.

- 4.15 Throughout the school the benefits of healthy eating and the importance of physical exercise are emphasised and excellent opportunities are provided by the school for pupils to take part in a range of physical pursuits. Lunch is currently in the style of a 'family servery' where older pupils and staff serve food to the younger children at their tables. Food is healthy and nutritious, with school council having influenced some changes to the menus, and there is plenty of support and guidance available for the pupils. In the EYFS, children understand the importance of exercise and the meaning of eating healthily. In the Nursery, a snack table is set up at the appropriate time for children to help themselves independently when they have washed their hands and sat down.
- 4.16 The school has a suitable plan in place to cater for the needs of pupils with SEND, who are extremely well supported within the school in accordance with school policy.
- 4.17 School council members represent the views of the pupils and they feed back to senior staff with their suggestions on how to improve systems within the school. Most pupils recognise that the school council provides a conduit through which they can express their feelings and opinions. Some school council minutes record pupils making requests for changes to the timetable and longer periods for lessons.

4.(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety

- 4.18 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.19 Safeguarding procedures are thorough and have regard to official guidance. All staff are appropriately trained in child protection at the required level and new staff go through a rigorous induction process. Throughout the school, including the EYFS, safeguarding and pupils' safety are seen as priorities. Their welfare, health and safety are assured through the consistent implementation and regular review of policies and procedures.
- 4.20 All necessary measures are taken to reduce the risk of fire and other hazards, with thorough risk assessments covering all areas of school life. Risk assessments for all outings are thorough and comprehensive. Regular fire drills are held and suitable records are kept. Staff receive clear guidance on fire safety and new procedures have been well rehearsed whilst building work is taking place.
- 4.21 Pupils who are sick or injured are very well cared for in a temporary medical room which the school intends to replace with purpose-built facilities when the current building work is complete. Appropriate records are kept. All staff are qualified in paediatric first aid.
- 4.22 The admission and attendance registers are well kept, suitably maintained and correctly stored.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 The governors are successful in ensuring that the school meets its aims, and in discharging in full their responsibilities for educational standards, financial planning and investment in staff, accommodation and resources. Through their committee structure, the governors have a comprehensive oversight of the workings of the school, including the EYFS, and they are kept well informed by the headmistress and senior staff. Governors have a wide range of experience and expertise which they apply to their committee work. Many are also ex-parents who have a personal interest in and affection for the school.
- 5.3 The governing body has supported and guided the school competently through the recent period of change following the retirements of longstanding senior staff including the previous headmistress and bursar. They have made well-considered appointments based on realistic identification of the future needs of the school.
- 5.4 The governing body has made a long term commitment to improving the facilities available to pupils through a carefully planned building programme. This is designed to improve pupils' daily life and the curriculum available to them, by providing a larger dining hall and purpose-built accommodation for art, design technology and food technology.
- 5.5 Governors ensure that the school complies with all statutory requirements. The deficiency noted at the previous inspection has been fully resolved and the appropriate medical checks on staff are undertaken. Governors have appointed a governor to oversee safeguarding and the EYFS, who makes regular visits to the setting. The whole governing body carries out the required annual review of safeguarding.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.6 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent.
- 5.7 Leaders and managers at all levels ensure that the school meets its aims to give pupils a balanced education in a homely and caring environment, to develop in confidence and independence, and to realise their full potential. Senior staff make sure that the school fully meets its responsibilities for safeguarding pupils and for implementing the school's policies in practice. In Nursery and Reception, senior staff make sure that the required policies, risk assessments and procedures relating to the EYFS are all in place.
- 5.8 There are very clear structures for meetings and communications, with the result that all staff feel well informed and involved in the work of the school and the decision making about its future. Morale is high, and there is a strong sense of camaraderie and team spirit. The senior management team works together cohesively and co-operatively, and has a very effective oversight of the school's strengths and areas for development, thanks to the quality of their monitoring. The

role of subject leaders is extremely well established. All take responsibility for monitoring and evaluating standards and provision in their areas, and are given time and support to do so by senior staff. This contributes to the sense of team work and common purpose in the school. The administrative side of the school is extremely well run so that the school operates very smoothly on a daily basis.

- 5.9 The senior management team takes good account of the views of all staff in preparing the school development plan, and have identified clear priorities for improvement which match the findings of the inspection. They are careful to introduce change in a measured and considered way, and not to bring about too much innovation while the school is coping with the disruption of major building works. They have a clear vision for the future direction of the school. Plans to improve the timetabling of the school day, the information for parents on their children's progress, the consistency of teaching and the quality of the outdoor area for the Reception classes are already in the pipeline.
- 5.10 In the EYFS, the whole team are involved in rigorous self-evaluation, which was one of the recommendations from the previous inspection, and all staff contribute towards setting the targets for future improvement which form part of the whole school development plan. Staff appreciate being involved and they share their best practice across the team regularly, in accordance with the recommendations of the previous inspection.
- 5.11 The school has well-embedded systems for the appraisal and continuing professional development of teaching, non-teaching, administrative and maintenance staff. Training in safeguarding, first aid and fire safety is regular and comprehensive, and is carefully recorded and tracked to ensure that all staff are covered and updates planned in advance. In the EYFS, the new requirements for regular staff supervision meetings are fully met and documented. Staff meet termly with their line manager to discuss any issues they have as well as to receive coaching to improve their personal effectiveness.
- 5.12 Links with parents are excellent. In the pre-inspection questionnaire the vast majority of parents indicated their very strong satisfaction with the education and quality of communications in the school. Parents speak highly of the family atmosphere in the school and value the fact that the headmistress and the staff know their children extremely well. Great importance is placed on ensuring that any issues or concerns such as bullying are dealt with promptly in accordance with the school's policy. This was confirmed by parents and pupils during the inspection. Parents feel their children are safe and secure and well looked after. They also appreciate the 'open door' policy seen in action during the inspection with staff readily available either in the morning or afternoon.
- 5.13 Parents are provided with detailed information prior to entry in the form of a parents' handbook and a prospectus. In the EYFS, teachers work closely with parents to ensure that children settle quickly and feel secure, and to identify their individual needs. Parents are invited into school early in the term of entry for talks on reading and mathematics, which are much appreciated. A settling-in parents' meeting is held in October followed by another in the spring term.
- 5.14 The website and recently introduced newsletters are valuable tools for the parents to keep informed, together with email addresses and a text service should the school be closed, for example, due to inclement weather. Parents can easily access information such as policies from the website. They are invited to be involved in the

life of the school supporting matches and attending assemblies, concerts, plays, sports days and speech days. At the end of the summer term, parents receive a full and informative report on the progress made by the children, and parents of children in Year 3 to Year 6 also receive an interim report card in the spring term. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a very small minority felt that they did not get enough information about the progress their children make. The school has recognised this and reports are under review.

- 5.15 Parents are encouraged to be involved in a range of social and fundraising events such as a ball and a quiz night. These are organised by the ways and means association, who regularly raise sums of money both for school projects and for national and local charities. The Friends of Halstead provide links between past pupils, parents and staff, including a newsletter and twice-yearly meetings.

What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.